



Happy Birthday to Aruba's donkeys!

Sunday marked the tenth anniversary of the establishment of Aruba's Donkey Sanctuary in Santa Lucia, and a gala celebration brought most families out to support the volunteer organization that helps protect and preserve this aspect of the island's natural environment. Donkeys were brought to Aruba hundreds of years ago as pack animals and to haul carts and most now run free through the "cunucu" or countryside. Fondacion Salba Nos Burico (Save our Donkeys) assists sick and pregnant animals, seeing them through birth or nursing them back to health and then returning them to their wild families, but continuing to track and protect them.

During the fun day at the farm parents and children were able play games, browse flea markets and buy souvenirs, while making their own Dutch pancakes as a snack. All proceeds went to aid the foundation in their work, and the most popular stop was the food stall where apples and carrots could be purchased to feed the twenty-eight donkeys now residing at the sanctuary. The animals were the big attraction, gentle and friendly; they passively accepted both food and being petted by many curious children. The donkeys were very well fed by the end of the day!

A highlight of the birthday party was the introduction of a souvenir calendar for 2008 consisting of the winning photos of a competition conducted over the summer. Farita Luidens of Checkpoint Color was the judge and awarded prizes for donkey pictures in three age categories, children eight to twelve years, thirteen to eighteen years, and adult.

A number of island vendors donated prizes for the winners, and Frank Jie Sam Foek took home an HP digital camera from E-Solutions for winning first place for a photo of donkeys at sunset, while young David Veneman has a new cell phone from SETAR for his rather unique portrait of a particular part of their anatomy. Various awards were distributed for second and third place winners and honorable mention. All the beautiful and often humorous winning pictures can be seen in their beautiful calendar, which sells for 25 Aruban florins (\$14) and can be purchased at the Donkey Sanctuary.

It was a wonderful day in the wilds of Santa Lucia for children, adults, and donkeys!